



## Table for Two (or: How we're drawn to things that hurt us.) by dansk\_javlen

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**Summary:**

Eddie Kasprak was 21 when he married Myra, and 25 when he realized he didn't love her as much as he hoped he would.

Living with Myra was like having the radio turned to static on full volume every single hour of the day, but at least he didn't have to deal with crippling silence and the echoes of a life he wishes he had.

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Or: The one where Richie is a waiter and Eddie doesn't want to eat at home. [ILLUSTRATED]

# Table for Two (or: How we're drawn to things that hurt us.)

## Author's Note:

so. this is a fic that goes into eddie's feelings about (and recovery from) his abuse from his mother and from myra.

this fic is illustrated! i'm trying to aim for one big color piece and at least one sketch per chapter!

eddie has mild ocd and undiagnosed depression. richie has undiagnosed adhd and autism.

some of the losers know each other and they'll eventually form the losers club >:) they're all around 26/27 years old and living in NYC.

reddie is endgame, but i don't know how we'll get there yet. established benverly, and pining hanbrough. the losers that aren't introduced in the first chapter will make an appearance in the next one.

proofread by the lovely eva: @honeycombpapen on twitter and @rosesburnedalive on ao3!!

that's all i have to say. enjoy!

1

Do you know when you're looking at your own reflection and you stare at yourself for just a tad too long and suddenly you realize you're an actual person. You notice your eyes, your nose, lips, that one mole that you've been wanting to get removed professionally for years but never took the initiative to get something done about. You notice you.

You; pronounced: /ju:/. Pronoun. Definition: The person you're stuck with for the rest of your life. This face is gonna stare back at you until the day you die. You're never getting a break from yourself. It scares you.

Eddie Kaspbrak is aimlessly staring at himself in his bathroom mirror when Myra's voice echoes throughout their apartment.

"I cheated on you."

He's quiet for a few moments, not quite listening. He looks down into the drain of the sink.

"Okay."

Eddie looks back up, looks into the mirror and catches Myra standing in the doorway to their bathroom.

"With a coworker, you met him at that Christmas party last year. The one with the tattoo. He served us the rosé".

"Okay."

"You're not gonna say anything?" Myra rubs her temples and walks back into the living room.

Myra, his wife, yes that's right. Some might say that Eddie Kaspbrak married young. He would disagree, lots of people got married at 21, lots of people found the love of their life way before that; childhood sweethearts evolving into dating, then marriage, then kids, then old age.

But Eddie was 20 years old, with a dead dad, a recently deceased mom, and absolutely nothing to keep him grounded. He had a lot of time for self-reflection, to think about finding a hobby, to get to know himself. And for a few months, he did. But it was like tugging on that single loose thread of your sweater; you pull and pull and pull and soon enough you realize that what's left is... nothing.

Then he met Myra, and she made him feel safe, like everything clicked back into place. He couldn't quite place the feeling, but for a moment in time he was content. Myra was caring, clean, always looking out for him. But kissing Myra felt awkward and uncomfortable. Holding her hand while walking down the street felt embarrassing and forced. They didn't have sex a whole lot, much to Myra's dismay, and the few times they did, it was only for Eddie to get a break from her whining.

Everything about being with Myra felt wrong. Myra seemed to like *him* , though, and he was sure he'd like her *eventually* .

Eddie Kaspbrak was 21 when he married Myra, and 25 when he realized he didn't love her as much as he hoped he would.

Sometimes he wondered why he even married her. But then, on his particularly bad days, she would hold him like his mom used to, she

would let him cry, and she would make him feel like everything was like it had always been. And he remembered why he married her, and he knew what was wrong about it.

Eddie Kaspbrak was 26 now, staring back at his reflection and feeling sedated.

Sometimes he wanted to scream, to just ruin all of their nice and expensive things in a fit of rage; free himself from his mom, from Myra. The grand act of rebellion he saw in movies, on TV and read about in books. But it never came.

Maybe he was just overreacting? She obviously cared about him, wanted the best for him. Any other man would be lucky to have her.

He blinked and found himself face-to-face with his wife, still standing in their bathroom.

“Well? Say something.”

Eddie blinked again.

“What? Sorry.”

“I cheated on you.”

“That’s okay.”

“And I’m moving out.”

They both pause.

“Wait, like, right now?”

Myra leaves the bathroom again with a groan. Eddie follows her into the living room. “I’m moving in with my sister.” He stares at the decorations on their windowsills, on the books on their coffee table, on the pictures on the walls, he looks to Myra, who isn’t looking back.

“Seriously, Eddie, you’re not even mad?”

“No it’s- it’s fine. I’m not mad at you.”

Myra looks back at him and tilts her head, eyebrows raised. Eddie thinks to himself she might be communicating non-verbally, but he couldn’t make out what she wanted to tell him.

Eddie is quiet as he sits down on the couch, and watches as Myra hurries around their home, grabbing different things, clothes, shampoo, toothbrush, perfumes and begins stuffing it into the suitcase they’d taken with them on their honeymoon.

Myra walks to the foyer and eventually the front door opens and closes.

“Myra...?” Eddie gets up from the couch and goes to check if she actually left.

Eddie stands alone in the foyer.

Eddie goes to bed as usual, leaves for work the next morning, not making much of his situation.

It wasn't the first time Myra had stormed off, she was bound to call him at any point throughout the day, and for the first time in their 5-year marriage, he turns his phone off of silent mode.

Eddie sits in front of his desk at work.

Eddie sits in his car during NYC rush hour.

Eddie stands in front of his front door.

Eddie stands in Central Park, checking his phone for the fifth time in approximately 2 minutes.

Eddie stands in a home too big and too cold, and eventually an entire



day passes with no word from Myra. The only evidence of their marriage the ring still on his finger and vacation photos on the walls that he don't look present in.

He didn't get why he was so upset after Myra's departure; it wasn't like he loved her, he'd known that for some years now. But staying with her was easier than being alone, being alone felt so... exhausting. More so than living with Myra, anyway. Living with Myra was like having the radio turned to static on full volume every single hour of the day, but at least he didn't have to deal with crippling silence and the echoes of a life he wishes he had.

He turns the TV on and doesn't turn it off when he leaves for work, he lets it stay on throughout the night as well. Reruns of old sitcoms fill the LED screen, painting his face in flashing colors as he sleeps on the couch.

He tries texting Bill when he wakes up the next morning, he doesn't get very far though, as his ringtone starts blaring in his ears. He checks who's calling and after one look, lets it finish ringing.

[ ONE (1) MISSED CALL FROM 'Myra' ]

He stares at his phone as several notifications appear on his screen, one by one, he reads them as they appear.

[ YOU HAVE (4) NEW MESSAGES FROM 'Myra' ]

[10:21AM] Myra: Pick up the phone Eddie

[10:23AM] Myra: You need to be mature about this

[10:27AM] Myra: You never think about how I feel

[10:30AM] Myra: If you won't even talk to me we're looking at divorce papers

For some reason, divorce papers seem more like a death declaration than anything else. Like getting a bullet sent by mail like in those TV-shows about the mob that Eddie watched as a kid.

He feels his stomach twist and turn, a knot stuck in his throat, his heart feels like it's both skipping every other beat and going a thousand miles an hour.

Eddie instinctually moves to the bathroom and closes the door. He stands in front of the sink, watching his nose and mouth as he starts to control his breathing.

He feels like he's having a heart attack.

He opens the medicine cabinet, reaching for a container of aspirin. He struggles with the child proof cap for a moment, looks at the bright orange container and puts it back on the shelf. Deep down, he knows he's not having a heart attack.

He looks back up at his reflection. His heart is in his chest.

*Come on.*

*COME ON.*

The TV is so loud, its blasting some advertisement for a fast food place, he's heard it so many times in the past few days. He turns on the faucet and can barely stand the feeling of how cold the water feels as he splashes his face with it.

*This is so stupid, you're an adult man. Get it together, she isn't even that mad at you. You have no reason to act like this.*

He looks down at his hands, looks at the dirt under his fingernails, he's shaking. He sits down on the cold tiled floor.

Eddie wakes up on the floor of the apartment at 5PM that day, with pain in his neck and clutching a blanket.



He takes a shower right after and cleans the bathroom- not that it needed cleaning. When he's done, it's nearing 7PM, and he feels nauseous, which is when he remembers he hasn't eaten the entire day. Moving to the kitchen, he looks in the cupboards and the fridge.

*Nothing, except milk .*

*It's better than nothing* , he figures. He reaches for the carton and glances at the expiration date; It was today.

He empties the carton of milk into the sink with a sigh and throws out the empty packaging. He reaches for his phone.

He finally texts Bill.

[DRAFT] YOU: Hello Bill! How are you? Do you want to hang out?

[DRAFT] YOU: Hi Bill! Are you doing anything tonight?

[6:48PM] YOU: Hey Bill! Sorry if this is out of the blue but I was wondering if you would want to catch up over some late dinner? It's been awhile since we last hung out. No worries if not!

He sighs as he presses send and stands, staring at his messaging app, waiting for a response. It comes 5 minutes later.

[6:53PM] Bill: Eddie! Hey man it's been awhile, yeah! I'm free right now actually. I'm totally up for some dinner!

Eddie doesn't think he's felt as relieved in his entire life as he does now.

[6:55PM] YOU: Oh neat! Do you have any places in mind, I don't eat out a lot haha.

[7:00PM] Bill: I have a place in mind! Meet me there in 45?

[ 'Bill' HAS SENT YOU ONE (1) LOCATION ]

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Eddie decides to walk to the diner, thinking he could use the fresh air. It had been awhile since he'd seen Bill anyway- it would do him good to have social interaction from somewhere that wasn't his job, not that he had any friends there anyway. A benefit of his job was that he mostly only interacted with people over the phone or in meetings- he ate lunch by his desk to be more efficient in how he spent his time, which meant bonding with coworkers during breaks wasn't something he did. Not that he minded, he always wondered if people found him annoying, he hadn't always felt as sedated as he did currently. When he was a kid he could barely shut up, always demanding attention to himself.

He isn't like that anymore, though, he's an adult. He remembers looking in the mirror one day and suddenly, a grownup was staring back at him. Sometimes he wonders how he got here so quickly, 26 years old in the blink of an eye, in the same life-span that made those summers when he was 12 seem unending. The warm sun hugging his face when he rode his bike down the same cul-de-sac for the fifth time in a row. It was perfect.

He had shared a major with Bill to begin with, they'd sat next to each other and though every single person in their lecture flocked to Bill with the same dedication that ornithologists study a rare bird with, Bill had decided to spend his time with Eddie. Bill was someone to admire and Eddie, to this day, wasn't sure what made him want to be his friend. But he was grateful nonetheless.

Bill changed his major after a few months, "creative writing", he said, informing Eddie that he had one shot at living his dream and that he would take it. He promised to keep in touch though, and Eddie knew that was probably just his way of being nice about cutting all contact

with him without directly saying so. He was used to people letting any relation to him fade out into nothing. When someone said “keep in touch” it usually meant radio silence, and he had learned to live with it. He'd be fine.

Which is why when Bill texted him around a week later asking to hang out, he was surprised to say the least. Several years had passed since then, and with Bills career taking off they didn't see each other much.

But perhaps part of growing up is learning that even if you don't see your friends all the time, it doesn't mean they don't love you. Distance makes the heart grow fonder, or something.

It also meant Bill gave Eddie the warmest hug he'd received in at least a year when they reunited in front of the diner. It lasted for maybe 20 seconds at most, but it felt like an eternity, and by God, Eddie had needed it.

“E-Eddie! What's up?”

What was up? His entire world is definitely collapsing around him, he's going to end up alone and remain alone. Eddie knew himself well enough to know that was not going to end well. Should he be seeking marriage counseling? Should he be seeking therapy? He feels at the end of his metaphorical rope and despite his profession, he can't even begin to analyse the risks of him staying alone for much longer- not that he wants to anyway. The realization is terrifying and by God is it nice to just see a friendly face.

Of course, Eddie can't say all that, so instead he gives Bill a gentle smile and goes with:

“Hi Bill.”

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The place Bill picked out is pretty standard, nothing too crazy, it's an American-style diner named 'The Sunset/Sunrise Diner' with laminated paper menus and seats that don't allow for Eddie to get completely comfortable. Not a lot of people seem to be present, two other booths are occupied and whatever staff is on shift are hanging around in the kitchen while waiting for something to do. It's perfect, in its own way.

It isn't long until their waiter approached them, a tall, dark haired man around their age, a light stubble and glasses that took up half his face. He had barely managed to get a word in before Bill got up from his seat and gave the waiter a hug.

“Richie! H-holy shit! W-what are you doing here?”

“Big Bill! Whoa! I could be asking you the same thing.”

Bill sits back down opposite of Eddie in their booth, he looks to Eddie, who still hasn't said a word. “Eddie, This is Richie, we're childhood friends from back home in Maine.” He speaks while gesturing to Richie, Eddie nods and holds out his hand. “Eddie Kaspbrak.” They shake hands, because they're proper adults and that's how you introduce yourself to people when you're a proper adult.



“Richie Tozier’s the name.” He taps his name-tag with his pen. “Gentlemen, what brings you to this fine establishment on this Saturday evening?” He says in the worst British accent Eddie had heard in a long time.

Bill takes the lead again, Eddie doesn’t mind. “Me and Eddie here are old friends, we’re just catching up. God, it’s been so long since I’ve seen you man, how have you been?” Bill asks.

“Well, I’m a comedian now. This is just a side-thing until things take off, y’know? It’s pretty normal actually, lots of people have two jobs when they’re working in the creative industry.” He explains, talking a thousand miles an hour. Richie sits down next to Eddie to be able to sit parallel to Bill as he talks. “You’re, uh, uh, working on that book still, right?” He asks, idly playing with his pen, scratching the side of his head with it and pointing it back and forth as he speaks. “What’s it called, The, uh.. Loft? Something or other.”

“Attic Room, Rich. But close.”

“Shit, that’s right.” He nods. “How’s that going?”

It isn't long before a voice echoes from the kitchen. A slightly quiet, but assertive: “Richard!”

Richie jerks up from his seat next to Eddie, he stands up, raises his left hand in either defeat or apology towards the kitchen and turns back to the two.

"I'm afraid I have to be your very professional server for the evening." He lowers his voice and leans in a bit closer. "So! What do you boys want?"

Eddie reaches for the menu and opens it, not quite looking.

"That's the kids menu, Eds." Richie states with a chuckle as he leans over the table, grabs the correct menu and hands it to Eddie, who is at a loss for words from pure embarrassment.

Bill orders a club sandwich while Eddie is still looking at the menu. He isn't quite reading it though, just idly staring at nothing in particular. He's pulled out of his trance when Richie speaks again, his obnoxious tone echoing through what feels like the entire diner.

"So! Eduardo, what'll it be?"

"I don't know, what's the first thing on the menu?" He blinks at the nickname and looks up at Richie, accidentally making eye contact with him. God those glasses were thick. They pretty much hid his entire face.

"Number one?" He gently grabs the laminated paper sheet from Eddie's hands and looks at it, pausing to read. "Signature burger, 's that fine with you, gorgeous?" Richie speaks bluntly, and lets out a small chuckle a few seconds after processing what he had just said. "I'm— joking." He pauses in between words, and the tips of his ears seem to have gotten a bit redder.

Eddie furrows his brows and blinks, what a weird guy. “Sure.”

“I’ll have that ready for you two, then. But let’s definitely catch up after I get off work. I’m thinking jägerbombs!” He gently slaps Bills shoulder before leaving for the kitchen.

Bill replies with a “Sure, Rich.” that sounded more like a ‘let’s see’ rather than a direct confirmation.

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Catching up with Bill was nice, he was a storyteller after all and that meant Eddie didn’t have to force himself to carry a conversation. Eddie asked him about the book Richie had mentioned and apparently it was a horror novel and he had been through 7 different drafts for endings- all of which his editor hated. He was hoping it would be his big break, and though he couldn’t tell him much of the story due to legal issues he assured Eddie he’d have a free copy at his home as soon as it was released. He told stories about he and Richie’s childhood, about the time his hamster escaped its cage and they, in a panic, skipped school to stay home and find it, about their time in high school, the first time they went to a party and Bills first hangover.

Eddie smiled and listened attentively.

“Wh-What about your job? Everything like normal?” Bill eventually asks.

“Yeah, everything’s the same. Same old 9 to 5.” He shrugs as he speaks.

“H-how’s Myra anyway?”

The question feels like ten knives stabbing at the back of his neck. “Uh, she’s fine, she’s moved in with her sister for some time.”

Bill blinks, obviously knowing that probably wasn’t a good sign. “Oh shit...H-how come?”

“It’s probably nothing, just another one of her... freakouts, I think. She’s coming back home anytime. It’s gonna be fine.” Eddie says, like a liar.

“Damn. Well, I won’t say I’m surprised but, I hope it works out.”

“Yeah, me too.”

Bill offers Eddie a comforting smile.

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The two ended up staying until closing, just talking about everything and nothing at the same time. Bill was always so sure of himself, sometimes Eddie wondered why he chose to be his friend. If he could change one thing about himself, he would want to make himself as brave as Bill was. Bill was diving head first into his dream of becoming a writer, risking it all and still not seeming stressed at all. He wished he could live like that.

They waited for Richie outside the front of the diner, standing outside in the semi-cold September air. Soon enough Richie appeared from the back entrance, with a cigarette already lit and a jacket that looked too thin for the weather.

“So are you boys up for a night out on the town? Let’s get to know each other properly without my bitch of a boss looming over my shoulder, huh?” He pulled the two into a half-hug and took a drag of his cigarette, the smoke being carried by the wind and hitting Eddie directly in the face. Bill looks to Eddie and offers him a non-verbal ‘you’re free to go if you don’t want to’ with a nod and a soft smile.

Eddie doesn't really *want* to spend a night out with Bill and his loud and charismatic friend. Bars and clubs are filled with germs, people throwing up left and right, people doing... God knows what in the bathrooms. But, on the other hand, it might be fun, and maybe the hangover he'd suffer the next morning would be worth it. As little as he wanted to admit it, Richie does seem like a guy that could lift your spirits.

Myra would hate him going to a bar this spontaneously, though.

“Sorry, not today.”

“Suit yourself then.” Richie takes one last drag before flicking his cigarette bud on the ground and ruffles Eddie’s hair right after. Eddie groans, mentally reminding himself to shower when he gets home.

“Do you have any idea how long that’ll stay there?” Eddie asks, pointing to the bud Richie had just thrown onto the pavement.

“What?” Richie looks like someone just asked him to find the square root of pi.

“That cigarette, you do know it takes 10 years for a cigarette filter to decompose, right? Do you have any idea how harmful that is? There’s literally a public ashtray 30 feet ahead.” He points.

“Cute.” Richie bends over and picks up the cigarette bud and walks over to the previously mentioned ashtray where he dumps it and jokingly bows at Eddie after he rejoins the two.

“Do you want me to clap for common human decency?” His words are harsh and he has no idea why, normally he isn’t this assertive when it came to his opinions. Something about Richie just makes him that way, he supposes.

“Something like that, yes.”

Bill and Eddie say their goodbyes, leaving each other with a friendly hug. Eddie offers Richie a wave before he walks back home, hands in

his pockets.

Eddie showers as the first thing he does when he gets home, he turns on the hot water and lets himself stand under it for at least 20 minutes before he even begins grabbing his shampoo. He feels exhausted, tired and disgusting and he washes his hair two times before he feels satisfied and finally exits the shower. It's midnight and Eddie sleeps on the couch yet again, the TV still on.

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Eddie stands in pure darkness. He reaches for a lightswitch, something, anything but his hands are covered in... something, blood, pus, dirt; he can't tell. And all of a sudden he's a kid again, he's in his room. His mother is there, she says something he can't make out properly and he feels dirty. He can't breathe. He feels weak. A clock is ticking in his room. Too loud, Too fast. Is he dead?

Eddie Kaspbrak has a nightmare that wakes him up at 2AM. He doesn't even know why he was scared, but his hands are shaking and he's covered in sweat. He lays on his couch quietly, dry swallowing before sitting up and taking a moment to collect himself. He walks to the kitchen and gets a glass of water. He downs it in one go and goes back to the couch, laying down in an attempt to fall back asleep. But he's still awake an hour later, and at 4AM, too. Was this going to be his life from now on?

Finally, he reaches for his phone, he isn't sure what he wants to use it for, but in a moment of sheer panic he calls Myra. He isn't thinking, and stays in the call after the automated voicemail message has played.

“I’ve been thinking, we should go on a cruise... or holiday or something. Spend some time together, wouldn’t that be fun? It’d be like the old days.” He doesn’t know why he’s saying this. “We could get new clothes, or new furniture. What do you think?” He doesn’t want to do either of those. “Please call me back.” He goes quiet for a full minute, thinking. “I love you.” He says, but feels like he’s on autopilot.

He regrets leaving the voicemail even before hanging up. He puts down his phone screen-down on the coffee table and rests his head in his hands, tears building up in his eyes but he doesn’t let himself cry.

It’s around 2 minutes later when his phone buzzes once.

Then twice.

He doesn’t dare check it.

It’s 4:17AM and Eddie Kaspbrak is pacing around his living room, pep-talking himself like a teenager before taking a big exam.

“Come on.. You can do it. Come on, Eddie. It’s just two texts, it’s gonna be fine.” He doesn’t quite believe himself.

It’s 4:31AM and Eddie Kaspbrak is checking his phone.

[YOU HAVE (2) NEW MESSAGES FROM ‘Bill’ ]



[4:03AM] Bill: heyy eddie, just thought i'd let u kno that im home now i hope ur doing ok!! you can always talk to me if u need someone but i get it if its hard to askfor helpp!

[4:04AM] Bill: it was super fun catching up w/ you! lets do it again soon, i lvoe you man

Eddie smiles.

The following day, for whatever reason, Eddie Kaspbrak walks back into the Sunset/Sunrise diner. He tells himself it's because he doesn't want to cook, but he only half believes that.

## 2

Richie Tozier is standing in the kitchen of the Sunset/Sunrise diner- his workplace of the last year and a half. Finding one's footing as a stand-up comedian was never easy, but doing it in New York City was practically like shooting yourself *in* the foot and THEN trying to find it. It was hard to say the least and Richie would be lying if he didn't say he was at least a little ashamed he'd never performed a set at something that wasn't a local bar where he already knew the owners.

But, c'est la vie.

Many people worked 12 hour shifts everyday of the week, some even more than that, for shittier pay than Richie was getting. And hey—how he was making ends meet with a NYC rent and a waiters salary, he honestly doesn't know. But he wasn't gonna complain about that. Not for a second.

He wasn't gonna lie, seeing Bill the previous day had kind of been both an improvement to his mental health and a blow to his self esteem.

He knew it isn't Bills fault, but seeing his friends become successful when he was barely scratching the surface of his own dream really hurt. He knows he's horrible for having that thought, and there definitely isn't anyone to blame but himself for his lack of success so far.

Sometimes, he thinks his parents might have been right about his dream. It isn't like Richie doesn't have a good head on his shoulders; he excelled at almost everything in school throughout his entire life. It would be the wiser decision to stick with something scholarly for his job, a more financially secure decision. But he wants to perform, wants to make people laugh and wants people to know who he is.

His parents hadn't entirely approved when he'd told them that. It wasn't like they had been abusive towards him or anything like it, but sometimes he feels like they don't understand a single word he says, even if he were to talk for hours on end. When he was a child, he sometimes felt like screaming at them, that hasn't changed all that much throughout the years.

Richie isn't a person that was good at handling his emotions; he knew that already. He has either too many or not enough of them.

He's sure he has something currently undiagnosed, but at 26 he figures it's way too late to figure that shit out. So he manages, and he figures that was probably the best way to describe himself: managing.

Richie Tozier lives in a two-bedroom apartment, sharing it with his best friend of 17 years, Stanley Uris.

The two didn't see each other a lot nowadays, Stan having landed a pretty good position as an accountant in a big firm, that Richie for the love of God just could never remember the name of. Richie works odd hours, and after he gets off work he usually goes straight to a club and parties it up with whoever wants to, or goes straight home to bed, waking up still tired and getting through the rest of the day with the help of five-hour energies until he finishes work and does it all over again.

But sometimes Stan is in the living room when Richie has just come home from work. He'd be watching a movie and Richie would crawl into the couch, too, and they'd enjoy each others quiet company. Sometimes Richie looks at Stan and wondered how he could be so lucky.

Richie Tozier blinks as Eddie enters his workplace for the second day in a row, he watches as the smaller man sits in the same booth as yesterday and he quickly approaches the booth.

“Just couldn’t get enough of me, could you?”

Eddie looks up at Richie, and a strange expression washes over his face as he realizes Richie’s going to be his waiter again.

“That’s not it.”

Richie waits for Eddie to elaborate. He doesn’t.

He notices the ring hugging Eddie’s finger, and speaks without thinking beforehand. “You’re married?” He doesn’t know why he’s disappointed.

“Yeah?”

“Are they hot?” *Why the fuck did he say that.*

“Fuck you.”

Richie laughs in order to relieve the tension, and thankfully Eddie lets out a small chuckle, too.

“So, what’ll it be today? Wait! Let me guess, yesterday you wanted a

number one, so today you'll want a number two."

"That wasn't my intention at all, actually. I wasn't planning to go chronologically th-

"Well, Eddie Spaghetti, a number two it is."

Eddie huffs and shakes his head before finally speaking again. "Sure."

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On the third day, Richie decides to be brave and write his number on a napkin the second he sees Eddie enter. Surely there is some reason he keeps coming back, and Richie doubts it's for the food. The mystery of Eddie Kaspbrak is the most exciting thing to happen to him for at least 6 months and he'll be damned if he's gonna let this opportunity go to waste.

He stares at the napkin for a good while.

He crumbles up the napkin and stuffs it in the pocket of his jeans and walks out into the main part of the diner with a smile on his face.

"So! I get the pleasure of seeing your face once again, Eds."

“Where did that nickname even come from?”

“Don’t know. Do you like it?” He asks, hopefully.

“No.”

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On the fourth day, Richie finally asks the question:

“Why do you keep coming back here anyway?”

“I don’t know.”

“Well, that’s boring.” Richie nods, and for once in his life doesn’t know what to say after that. Eddie is the one to break the silence.

“I’m going through a divorce, I think.”

Holy shit, Richie didn’t know what he was expecting but it sure as hell was not that.

“You think?” Richie can’t help but chuckle. “How can you not be sure of something like that? Either you’re going through a divorce or you’re not.. There’s not like.. a grey zone for shit like that.”

Eddie just stares at him, rubs his temples and mumbles a quiet: “I don’t know why I thought you’d care.” He pauses, and looks down. “Just get me whatever is number three.”

“Sure thing, Eddie.” Richie knows he should apologize- it would arguably be the best move for him to make right now. He doesn’t.

--

As Eddie asks for the check, Richie insists it’s no issue: “I’ll take care of it, don’t worry.”

“I don’t need your pity.” Eddie snaps and digs through his wallet and leaves a 20 dollar bill on the counter. “I don’t know what I’m doing here.” He speaks under his breath, shrugs on his red track jacket and leaves promptly after.

Richie takes his 15 minute break and goes outside to smoke right after Eddie leaves .

He feels like screaming.



---

3

The contact Eddie has had with Myra for the last 5 days has been severely limited. He regrets leaving the voicemail the other day, but some part of him almost wants her to call him back, if only to yell at him, to call him an idiot, useless and make him feel utterly horrible.



Some part of him wants Myra to just mail the divorce papers to their address, set up a meeting with a divorce attorney and get it over with.

The biggest part of him just wants everything to go back to normal.

The TV is turned off by now and Eddie is on the couch trying to sleep at 9PM, laying in silence and trying not to think too hard about his situation.

He hadn't eaten since lunch at work and he figures he'll be fine until breakfast at work. He could make that work.

He thinks back to Myra's endless lectures.

He thinks back to his mother's endless lectures.

Was this his grand act of rebellion? Letting himself starve when she was always insistent on getting nutritious meals 3 times a day. If so, it was a pretty shitty way to rebel- wasn't anything like the big speeches people gave in movies at all. Eddie almost felt sorry for himself.

He thinks back to the diner the previous day.

*“Why do you keep coming back here anyway?”*

*“I don’t know.” He had answered, but he knew well enough.*

Something about Richie Tozier pisses him off, but something about him also... intrigues him. He wishes he could be more like him, overly confident, not caring what other people thought about him, and able to speak his mind.

He wonders if Richie Tozier was at work right now.

He wonders if he was expecting him to visit for a late dinner.

He wonders why he invited him out for drinks the other day.

He doesn’t know why, but Eddie swallows his pride and heads down to the diner for the 5th day in a row.

It’s around 9:30PM when Eddie enters Sunset/Sunrise, he scans the diner, there’s a large group of teenagers taking up two booths, they’re making a lot of noise, laughing and generally seem to be having fun. He envies them.

He looks to the cash register where an extremely tired Richie, that hasn’t spotted him yet, is on his phone. He walks up to him and he swears Richie almost drops his phone in pure shock. Eddie tries not

to laugh.

“Don’t say a word.” Richie speaks as he places his phone back in his pocket.

“I’m quiet.” He reassures, hands raised in defeat.

“So, what can I get ya, Eddie? Number five?” He asks, Eddie nods.

“You’re so weird.” Richie comments as he punches his order in.

“Fuck you, *you’re* weird.” Eddie responds bluntly. He doesn’t quite mean it.

--

Richie has 5 minutes left of his shift and Eddie is still in the diner, he finished eating a while ago and by now he’s just sitting, looking out at the street as people pass by.

Richie wonders who he’s waiting for.

Eddie jumps in his seat when Richie sits across from him in the booth.

“Jesus christ! You could’ve given me a heart attack.”

“Are you just not gonna go home tonight, Edster?”

“Oh you’re eager to get me to leave huh?”

“That’s not what I said. Why are you hanging back? Who are you waiting for?”

Eddie blinks. “I’m not waiting for anyone.” His tone is accusatory.

“Alright then, I just finished my shift so I’m heading out then, ciao Eduardo.” Richie speaks as he gets up from the seat, he takes two steps before Eddie speaks again.

“Where are you heading to?”

“Why? You wanna tag along?”

Eddie groans and puts on his jacket. “Let’s just go drinking, asshole.”

“On a Thursday?”

“Shut up.” Eddie punches him on the shoulder (gently), Richie laughs.

---

Eddie Kaspbraks first clubbing experience is at 26 years old, on a Thursday, and with a person he’s known for less than a week. It’s loud, disgusting and generally uncomfortable.

But something about it is also pretty fun. It’s a relatively small club, and it even has proper booth seating away from the dance floor so Eddie gets to sit in a corner and be as comfortable as he can get in a place like that.

He wonders why he decided to go out with Richie Tozier of all people.

Then it hit him that *this* was was probably his act of rebellion.

He doesn’t know if he’s disappointed or surprised. Maybe both.

Richie is talking about something that Eddie can’t quite make out due to the music being played on an almost ungodly volume. Eddie is too embarrassed to ask “what?” for the fourth time, so he just nods and hopes for the best. Then Richie leaves their table and Eddie is confused to say the least, he looks after the other in the crowd of 21 year olds on the dancefloor and around the bar, watches as he walks up to the bar and holds up two fingers. He doesn't have any idea

what Richie is saying to the bartender.

Eddie takes his phone out of his pocket, checks the time three times in a row and then it runs out of battery. Great. He wonders if he should just head home.

He looks up as Richie is approaching their table, hands full of what looks like shot glasses.

“What are those?” Eddie asks and Richie almost looks offended. “They’re jägerbombs, Eddie. Have you never tried them before?”

Eddie’s silence speaks volumes.

Richie elaborates: “Well, they’re basically Jägermeister and redbull combined in a shot.”

“You’re not supposed to mix energy drinks and alcohol. Do you have any idea how dangerous that is to your body? You’re literally bound to have a heart attack if you put shit like that in your body.”

Richie shrugs and grins. “I’m here for a good time, not a long time.” He raises his eyebrows, holds up the shot glass and downs it in one go.

Eddie sighs, smiles to himself and, after a moment of hesitation, does the same.

--

It's 1AM when Richie pulls out a pack of Marlboro Reds and asks Eddie if he has a lighter.

He doesn't. Richie asks the table behind them if any of them have one, they don't either.

Richie ends up using the candle on the table they're sitting at to light his cigarette and Eddie thinks that he looks like something out of a bad oscar-bait movie.

It's 2AM when Richie begins telling stories from his childhood. 2:05AM when Eddie finds out Richie had dyed his hair 7 different colors through his life. 2:10AM when he finds out Richie only had 3 friends as a kid. 2:13AM when he finds out he started smoking at age 12. 2:20AM when he finds out Richie shares an apartment with his best friend, Stan, and that they've been friends since they were 9 years old.

They keep drinking, and soon enough Eddie tells Richie about his own childhood, about the parts he wants to share, anyway. He doesn't tell him about the time he spent an entire summer inside because he broke his arm. Doesn't tell him about all the times he ate alone at lunch and certainly not about the time he found out his mom had been giving him placebos, and then proceeded to continue living his life like he didn't know.

It's 3:39AM when Eddie finds out Richie's hands are usually cold and clammy. He finds this out because Richie is grabbing his hand, insisting that they both dance. Eddie is almost drunk enough to agree. He excuses himself to the bathroom and Richie lets him know he'll save him a spot on the dancefloor.

-

Eddie is alone in the men's bathroom and he's staring at his reflection, as he's done many times in the past week.

*What are you doing here Eddie?*

He washes his hands.

*What do you think you'll find in him?*

He washes them again.

*This is a stupid idea. Go home. You're safe at home.*

Eddie doesn't know what 'safe' means.

-



Eddie finds Richie while he's dancing horribly with someone whose face he doesn't bother looking at.

"I'm going home."

"What?"

"I'm leaving." Eddie repeats and heads towards their booth to grab his coat, Richie drags himself away from the dancefloor and follows after him.

"What do you mean? What's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong I'm just heading home."

"If you need to puke I'll be happy to hold your fanny pack."

"Shut the fuck up. I don't know what I'm doing here. I don't even fucking know you."

Richie keeps following after Eddie and soon enough the two are standing on the streets of New York, they're obviously attracting attention

“I don’t know what’s up with you, Eds.”

“Don’t fucking call me Eds!” Eddie snaps. “I hate your stupid nicknames.”

Richie is quiet.

“Jesus Christ, Richie.” He pauses, rubbing his temples. “I’m going home now.”

Eddie watches as the other blinks, reaches in his pocket and hands Eddie a crumpled up napkin, he doesn’t glance at it. “At least text me when you get home.”

Eddie takes it.

“If it’ll make you sleep better at night.”

“It will.”

He leaves without a word.

--

Eddie is home 25 minutes after that, he could've been home in 5 if he'd taken the subway but he's not taking any risks with the sheer amount of germs on a subway at 4:30AM. He also thinks it might be him stalling for time, because he doesn't really want to be home. He wants to go home, but he doesn't really want to *be* there. It was a feeling he had almost every time he left the house, it'd gotten better over the years but sometimes it flared up and he felt like a child again.

As a kid, whenever the world got too much for him, he would just lie down. Sometimes he'd look at the sky, sometimes stars, but most of the time it would be his bedroom ceiling. He knew the pattern of the glow-in-the-dark stars he had stuck to his ceiling by heart now.

Sometimes he would lie down for a minute, other times he would lie for hours on end, waiting for the feeling to pass. Sometimes it didn't pass at all and he would still get up anyway.

He enters his home with no grace, and hurries towards the couch so quickly that he doesn't notice the extra pair of womens shoes in the foyer.

The second his body hits the couch he breaks into a full-on sob. He doesn't even know why.

Soon enough a figure emerges from the bedroom. "Eddie-bear?"

Eddie sits up on the couch. He doesn't say a word.

"Oh Eddie, I've been so worried about you. Where have you been?"

He remains quiet. He's shaking with 10 years of pent-up energy.

"Have you been drinking? Oh, Eddie-bear. Come here."

And she embraces him, holds him like she always does. It feels familiar.

"It's okay. You're safe now."

He doesn't text Richie.

4

Richie is careful not to wake up Stan when he enters the apartment, not only because he doesn't wanna hear Stans rants about how going out on weekdays is stupid, but also because he simply doesn't want to wake up his friend when he knows he has work in the morning. Sometimes people doubted it, but Richie was actually a genuinely good friend at times.

Richie moves to his bedroom and is awake much longer than he'd like to admit, eagerly waiting for a text informing him that Eddie had made it home alright. After an hour of waiting, it still hasn't arrived

and Richie makes a half-drunk, half sleep-deprived decision to text Bill, praying the author is up.

[5:52AM] YOU: heyyy billlll do you have eddies number perhaps?

Richie distracts himself with games on his phone until he finally gets a response several hours later. His worry for the smaller man hasn't ceased though, and he hurries to check his texts when Bill does respond.

[ YOU HAVE ONE (1) NEW MESSAGE FROM 'big Bill' ]

[8:57AM] big Bill: I'm not even gonna question why you were awake at 5 in the morning... I do have his number, why do you need it?

[8:59AM] YOU: its a long story and i promise ill tell you, i just need to get a hold of him right now

[9:03AM] big Bill: ...Don't make me regret this.

[ 'big Bill' HAS SENT YOU ONE (1) NEW CONTACT ]

[9:05AM] YOU: I LOVE YOUUU THANKS BILL <3 MWAH

He stares at his phone for a good minute, debating what to do next, he honestly hadn't thought he'd actually get his number.

[DRAFT] YOU: hey eddie did you get home alright?

No, too formal.

[9:12AM] YOU: heyyyy eddie did you get home alright?

[9:14AM] YOU: this is richie btw. Bill gave me ur number

[ 'Eddie' IS TYPING ]

[ 'Eddie' IS TYPING ]

[ 'Eddie' IS TYPING ]

[ ✓ read 9:20AM ]

*Fuck.*

Richie doesn't even know why he was so strangely drawn to Eddie, there is just something about him that felt like home, like sitting in front of the fireplace after coming inside from rain, like testing out a new pack of brand new markers, like coming home from a week-long field trip and finally getting to eat your moms homecooked meals again.

Even though Eddie seems to hate his guts, there is always enough of a sparkle in his eyes that Richie was sure he didn't *actually* hate him. He doesn't want to assume how the other feels about him, but Richie isn't stupid nor blind. They had fun earlier, at least it seemed like they did, this could become a friendship and Richie didn't have many of those.

He really can't be sure, though. He did seem genuinely pissed off when they parted ways a few hours earlier and he doesn't want to come off too strong by continuing to contact him if Eddie is actually mad.

He is worried, though.

He gets ready to text again when his phone starts ringing.

[ 'Eddie' IS CALLING ]

He picks up and there's silence for a good amount of time.

"Eddie? You there?"

"Yeah, hold on, uh-" There's a sound of shuffling around on the other end of the line.

"Are you home?"

“Yeah sorry, I’m here now. I’m home.” Richie can’t help but notice that his voice sounds unsure.

“Well, that was why I texted you, but, uh, do you need to talk, buddy?” He offers.

“No it’s- it’s fine. I’m fine. I just- That was a mistake, It was wrong and I’m sorry for lashing out at you, I just get like this sometimes and I don’t know what’s wrong with me-”

“Hold on, Eddie, just breathe for a moment. Did something happen?”

Eddie does take a few breaths as he looks for the right words.

“No, it’s- going out drinking- it was stupid. It was wrong of me and I shouldn’t have done it.”

“Wait. What was wrong about it? You’re a grown ass man, you’re allowed to go out and have a few drinks.”

Silence.

“You do know that you’re allowed to do that, right?”



Silence again.

“Hello..? Eddie, are you there?”

“Sorry, I’m- yeah, yeah you’re right.”

“Jesus, Eds..”

Eddie doesn’t respond.

“Listen, Eddie I know we don’t know each other that well but, if you need help with anything you can say what it is. Even just Bill, I’m sure he’d be more than happy to help with whatever you’re going through.”

“I’m not going through anything. I don’t want to bother Bill with my bullshit-” He stops talking to collect his thoughts. “I just- can you talk?”

“..Okay, well, I have to work in uh...” He pauses to think. “a couple hours, but do you wanna stay on the line until then?” He offers.

“Yeah- Yeah I’d like that.” His voice sounds unsure and fragile, like he’s trying not to be too loud.

“What to say...” Richie paces around the living room as he speaks. “Should I tell you about the time Bills hamster escaped its cage and we skipped school to find it?”

“Bill already told me that one.”

“Ah I see- let me think then.”

“You can tell it anyway, though. I- I don’t mind hearing it twice.”

“Alright then.” Richie says in a horrible australian accent. Eddie chuckles on the other end.

When Stan wakes up and enter the living room, he raises a brow at his roommate being on the phone *that* early in the morning, but doesn't comment on it when he sees how much Richie was enjoying talking to whoever was on the other end of the line. He decides to make his best friend breakfast, not because he has to, but because he wants to and finally heads out to work.

The two hang up when Richie has to leave the apartment to go to work. Eddie thanks him for the many, sometimes embarrassing, stories and Richie responds that it wasn't a problem.

In the Kaspbrak household, Eddie had just ended a several hour long phone call and he is exhausted to say the least, Myra had headed to work before the phonecall had started, leaving Eddie alone in the home.

For once the silence of an empty home seems comforting.

He unlocks his phone and dials Bill.

It takes a few moments before he picks up.

“Eddie! Sorry man, I just s-stepped out of the shower, how are you?”

“Uh.. It’s- If you’re not doing anything today could I come over? Myra came home last night and I- I think- I think I shouldn’t be home right now.”

An hour later Eddie finds himself in front of Bill’s apartment complex, he blinks, takes a breath and presses the buzzer labeled ‘W. Denbrough’.

He doesn't feel ready.

### **Author's Note:**

thanks for reading so far! im on twitter @dansk\_javlen ! i try my best to make sure they work, but if the images aren't loading, they can be found under their respective chapter on twitter:

[https://twitter.com/dansk\\_javlen/  
status/1204137667472056323](https://twitter.com/dansk_javlen/status/1204137667472056323)

did you like this? did you hate it? let me know!!